

Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

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APR 11 1996

In the Matter of)

Implementation of Section 302 of
the Telecommunications Act of 1996)

Open Video Systems)

CS Docket No. 96-46

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REPLY COMMENTS OF THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL respectfully submits these reply comments to the Federal Communications Commission ("Commission") in the above-captioned proceeding.

I. INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 1996, the Commission released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 96-99) ("Notice"), requesting comment on how it should implement the regulatory framework for open video systems ("OVS"). In response, the National League of Cities, the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, the National Association of Counties, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Montgomery County, and several cities (hereinafter "NLC"), filed joint comments containing specific proposals for implementing that framework.

In their comments, NLC identified four key principles that must guide the Commission in formulating its rules. First, the Commission's rules regarding the PEG and other Title VI requirements mandated by Congress for OVS must ensure that OVS operators will meet local community needs and interests. Second, the Commission must adopt nondiscrimination provisions that ensure that all programmers will have truly open and affordable access to OVS

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and that prevent an OVS from becoming a cable system in disguise. Third, the 1996 Telecommunications Act does not permit cable operators to become OVS operators. Fourth, the Commission's rules must acknowledge the property interests that local governments hold in the local public rights-of-way.

THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL strongly supports NLC's comments and urges the Commission to follow these four principles in formulating OVS rules. **THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL** discusses below its experience in creating and implementing PEG obligations that meet critical local needs.

II. DISCUSSION

This Commission's statutory mandate in adopting PEG requirements for OVS is clear. As NLC notes, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 requires the Commission to establish PEG obligations for OVS that are consistent with local needs and interests, and to impose on an OVS operator obligations equivalent to those obligations imposed on cable operators. To fulfill these mandates, the Commission should, as proposed by NLC, require OVS operators "to match or negotiate," that is, to match each incumbent cable operator's PEG obligations, or to negotiate agreements acceptable to the affected communities.

The record in this proceeding demonstrates that local governments--as franchising authorities and PEG programmers--play a critical role in ensuring the local communications

needs and interests are met.¹ Moreover, local governments, as the National Cable Television Association states, “are in the best position to deliver on the Act’s intent to accomplish PEG access over open video systems.”²

In the City of Saint Paul, PEG access and programming serve community interests in ways that are not met by other video providers such as local broadcasters and satellite programmers. Thousands of hours of original community-based programs are produced by Saint Paul citizens, community organizations, schools, and city and county government each year. PEG programs that are regularly cablecast on Saint Paul’s five PEG channels include a weekly local news show, a Hmong community affairs program, live city council and county board meetings, live call-in shows on community issues, community events, and a variety of school programs. The citizens of Saint Paul benefit from connecting with their community in a way that would not be possible without PEG channels and programming: they can watch local government in action and find out firsthand what’s going on in the community. PEG also

¹See, e.g., Comments of the Below-Named Political Subdivisions of the State of Minnesota at 7 (franchising authorities have “considerable experience in successfully negotiating, creating and implementing . . . PEG obligations”) Comments and Petition for Reconsideration of the National Cable Television Association, Inc. at 34 (“The local franchising authority is the governmental entity best positioned to appreciate community needs and most experienced in the implementation of PEG access rules”); and Joint Comments of Cablevision Systems Corporation and the California Cable Television Association at 21 (“Congress certainly understood that PEG access requirements are now imposed by localities to meet critical localism goals”).

² Comments and Petition for Reconsideration of the National Cable Television Association, inc. At 33. See also, Comments of MFS Communications Company, Inc. at 27 (“The manner of which OVS operators and/or their customer programmers comply with the PEG obligations should generally be worked out between the programmer and the local government entity that oversees the implementation of these rules for cable operators”).

provides a unique opportunity for multi-cultural communication and expression; an important aspect for Saint Paul, as we have a large Southeast Asian population.

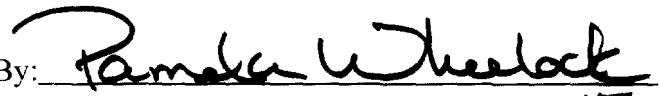

By adopting NLC's proposal, the Commission will ensure that PEG access continues to serve local needs and interests in **THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL**, and will satisfy the Commission's statutory mandate to impose equivalent obligations on OVS and cable operators.

III. CONCLUSION

THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL respectfully requests the Commission to adopt a framework for OVS consistent with the proposals and principles recommended by NLC et al. in their comments.

Respectfully submitted,

THE CITY OF SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

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